

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 MCT-01 IO-13 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02
SS-15 USIA-06 SY-05 USSS-00 ACDA-07 EB-08 TRSE-00
SIL-01 LAB-04 COME-00 DHA-02 OPR-02 /099 W
-----261410Z 126915 /40

R 261306Z MAR 77
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2402
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
USINT BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
DIA WASHDC
SECDEF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 DAMASCUS 2007

DEPARTMENT ALSO FOR SY/CC

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, PINS, SY, LE
SUBJECT: ANOTHER VIEW OF JUMBLATT ASSASSINATION

REF: DAMASCUS 1964

1. SUMMARY: SHOEFI CLAIMED SARG PLANNED MURDER OF JUMBLATT
TO INTIMIDATE LEBANESE LEADERS WHO TRYING TO FORM ANTI-
SYRIAN FRONT. ANTI-REGIME ACTIVITY IN JABAL DRUZE PICKING
UP. SARG HAS ARRESTED 13 SYRIANS FROM HAMA WHO ALLEGEDLY
RESPONSIBLE FOR MANY ASSASSINATIONS IN COUNTRY,
INCLUDING THAT OF DAMASCUS UNIV. RECTOR, BUT RIF'AT
AL-ASAD HAS SIMULTANEOUSLY TURNED OVER TO SECURITY
INVESTIGATORS TWO INDIVIDUALS HE CLAIMS KILLED AL-FADIL.
WE HAVE UNCONFIRMED REPORT THAT (ALAWITE) SECRETARY OF
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TARTUS BRANCH OF BAATH PARTY HAS RECENTLY BEEN ASSASS-
INATED. END SUMMARY.

2. MFA AMERICAN AFFAIRS DIRECTOR, LEADING DRUZE POLITICAL
FIGURE AND ASAD CRITIC HAMOUD SHOEFI TOLD US MARCH 25
THAT, IN VIEW OF HIMSELF, MOST SYRIAN DRUZE AND MANY LEBANESE
ASAD REGIME PLANNED MURDER OF KAMAL JUMBLATT. HE SAID SOME

OF THE KILLERS WORE THEIR SYRIAN ARMY UNIFORMS, AND CONFISCATED CAR TO TAKE THEM TO SYRIAN MILITARY OFFICE IN BEIRUT, WHERE THEY ALLOWED DRIVER TO DEPART UNHARMED. SHOEFI SAID ASAD'S PURPOSE WAS TO INTIMIDATE LEBANESE POLITICAL LEADERS WHO HAD BEEN SHOWING SOME SIGNS OF COOPERATING TO FORM ANTI-SYRIAN FRONT. JUMBLATT HAD BEEN NEGOTIATING WITH BOTH SYRIANS AND WITH PHALANGE. PHALANGE, HOWEVER, INSISTED THAT JUMBLATT CUT HIS ALLIANCE WITH PALESTINIANS, BUT JUMBLATT REFUSED TO COMPLY AND SOUGHT TO MAKE PALESTINIAN ISSUE NON-NEGOTIABLE. ACCORDING TO SHOEFI, LAST MEETING WITH GEMAYEL HAD BEEN IN PRESENCE OF FATAH SECURITY CHIEF ABU HASAN (AKA SALAMAH). JUMBLATT'S DEATH WAS INTENDED AS A WARNING TO LEBANESE LEADERS NOT TO OPPOSE SYRIAN PRESENCE IN LEBANON.

3. SHOEFI SUGGESTED THAT ASAD MAY HAVE OVERPLAYED HIS HAND THIS TIME. HE SAID REGIME MADE LITTLE ATTEMPT TO COVER ITS INVOLVEMENT. FOR EXAMPLE, HE WAS TOLD BY FRIEND OF HIS AT SANA THAT SANA HAD RECEIVED REPORT OF JUMBLATT'S DEATH FOR DISTRIBUTION SAME DAY OF ASSASSINATION BUT PRIOR TO TIME EVENT TOOK PLACE. SHOEFI SAID HIS FRIEND CONTACTED HIM AND GAVE HIM IRAQI LICENSE PLATE NUMBER, WHICH SHOEFI SPREADING AMONG HIS OWN CONTACTS BEFORE RADIO BROADCASTS DISSEMINATED THIS INFO.

4. SHOEFI SAID DRUZE UNREST WITHIN SYRIA HAS ALREADY INCREASED SINCE JUMBLATT'S MURDER. HE NOTED THAT LOCAL DRUZE COMMUNITY HAD BEEN RELATIVELY QUIESCENT UNDER ASAD

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BECAUSE DRUZE HAD SUFFERED SO MUCH UNDER PREVIOUS REGIME THAT ASAD SHREWDLY PROTRAYED HIMSELF TO THE DRUZE AS THEIR POLITICAL SAVIOR. SUWAYDA AREA ALSO ENJOYING COMPARATIVE ECONOMIC BOOM AS REMITTANCES FROM FAMILY MEMBERS WHO ESTABLISHED THEMSELVES IN LATIN AMERICA DURING 1950'S HAVE BEGUN TO FLOW IN AND FRUIT TREES PLANTED DURING 1960'S HAVE BEGUN TO BEAR FRUIT. BUT ON MARCH 17 GENERAL STRIKE WAS CALLED IN SUWAYDA AS MEMORIAL TO JUMBLATT AND PROTEST AGAINST HIS MURDER WHICH SUCCEEDED IN CLOSING DOWN SHOPS AND EVEN SARG OFFICES. GOVERNOR OF SUWAYDA TRIED TO PREVENT STRIKE BUT WAS ORDERED BY DAMASCUS AUTHORITIES TO BACK OFF LEST CONFRONTATIONS DEVELOPED BETWEEN CITIZENS AND SARG FORCES. SHOEFI SAID HE DOES NOT KNOW TO WHAT EXTENT NEW SPIRIT OF OPPOSITION AMONG DRUZE WILL DEVELOP, BUT NOTED THAT PAST EFFORTS IN BUILDING ANTI-ASAD COALITION HAD BEEN HINDERED BY LACK OF DRUZE INVOLVEMENT. HE SAID ASAD OBVIOUSLY COUNTING ON DRUZE TO REMAIN PACIFIED. SHOEFI SAID HE WAS AWAKENED EARLY MORNING OF MARCH 25 BY VISITORS FROM JABAL

DRUZE WHO TOLD HIM THAT OPPOSITION TO REGIME WAS GAINING MOMENTUM THERE. HOWEVER, SHOEFI CONCLUDED THAT AT THIS POINT HE COULD ONLY OFFER SPECULATION DURZE UNREST MIGHT DEVELOP INTO DANGER TO REGIME, WHEREAS ASAD HAD WEIGHT OF PAST DRUZE PASSIVITY ON HIS SIDE.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 DAMASCUS 2007

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5. SHOEFI CONTINUED THAT SOME INTERESTING BREAKTHROUGHS HAD DEVELOPED ON INTERNAL FRONT TO ROUND UP PERPETRATORS OF TERRORIST INCIDENTS AGAINST SARG OFFICIALS. MINISTRY OF INTERIOR POLITICAL SECURITY DEPT. HAD TWO GROUPS OF CRIMINALS ALLEGEDLY RESPONSIBLE FOR ASSASSINATION OF DAMASCUS UNIV. RECTOR MUHAMMAD AL-FADIL. FIRST GROUP COMPOSED OF THIRTEEN INDIVIDUALS FROM HAMA, INCLUDING TWO SECURITY OFFICIALS, WHO ARRESTED FEW DAYS AGO AND TURNED OVER TO MINYINT'S POL SECURITY DIRECTOR AHMAD SAID SALAH. SALAH WAS TOLD TO PRODUCE CONFESSIONS THAT GANG RESPONSIBLE FOR ASSASSINATIONS IN DAMASCUS, HAMA, ALEPPO AND EVEN SOME IN LEBANON. STORY PUT OUT WAS THAT GANG LED BY AHMAD TURKAWI, A FOLLOWER OF AKRAM HAWRANI, HAWRANI ARRANGED TRIP TO BAGHDAD FOR TURKAWI WHERE LATTER

RECEIVED IRAQI MONEY AND WEAPONS. SARG SECURITY ALSO
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DISCOVERED CACHE OF WEAPONS, ACCORDING TO STORY, HIDDEN
AT FARM OWNED BY TURKAWI'S BROTHER. AMONG WEAPONS WERE
"WIRE-GUIDED MISSILES", WHICH ALLEGEDLY PERSUADED SECURITY THAT
IRAQIS INVOLVED.

6. NOTING THAT HE OBTAINED HIS INFORMATION FROM SOURCE
WITH DIRECT ACCESS TO SALAH, SHOEFI CONTINUED THAT
INTERROGATION OF SUSPECTS HAD BEEN INITIATED AND TWO
DETAINEES HAD ALREADY DIED OF TORTURE WHEN RIF'AT AL-
ASAD TURNED OVER TO SALAH TWO INDIVIDUALS DESCRIBED AS
ASSASSINS OF DR. AL-FADIL. TWO HAD ALREADY ALLEGEDLY BEEN
TORTURED BY RIF'AT'S SUBORDINATES, AND THEY READILY
ADMITTED TO SALAH THAT IF HE WOULD SPARE THEM FROM FURTHER
TORTURE, THEY WOULD CONFESS RESPONSIBILITY FOR MURDERING
FADIL. HOWEVER, ACCORDING TO SHOEFI, THEY ASSURED SALAH
THAT THEIR CONFESSIONS SHOULD NOT DETER HIM FROM CONTIN-
UING SEARCH FOR REAL KILLERS SINCE THEY THEMSELVES
HAD NOT BEEN INVOLVED. THEIR INNOCENCE REPORTEDLY BECAME
APPARENT WHEN THEY TAKEN TO SCENE OF CRIME TO REENACT
MURDER AND TO CONFRONT WITNESSES, WHO DID NOT IDENTIFY
THEM AS THE KILLERS.

7. SHOEFI ADDED THAT THESE TYPES OF RIGGED INVESTIGATIONS
ARE NOT ISOLATED OCCURRENCES. HE SAID FONMIN KHADDAM'S
NEPHEW HAD TOLD HIM THAT KHADDAM WAS SHOWN PHOTO OF
DETAINEE ALLEGEDLY RESPONSIBLE FOR ATTEMPTING TO KILL
HIM IN DECEMBER WHO HAD DIED DURING INTERROGATION.
KHADDAM BECAME UPSET WHEN HE REALIZED VICTIM WAS NOT ONE
OF THE ASSASSINS.

8. SHOEFI SURMISED THAT SARG WOULD PROBABLY CONDUCT
PUBLIC TRIAL OF HAMA GANG TO STRESS EFFICIENCY OF SECUR-
ITY APPARATUS AND TO BLACKEN IRAQ'S REPUTATION. THERE
MAY BE SOMETHING TO THIS, FOR DCM TOLD BY SWISS AMBASS-
ADOR THAT THIRTEEN MEMBERS OF EIGHTEEN-MAN GANG ALLEGEDLY
RESPONSIBLE FOR INTERNAL TERRORIST ACTS HAVE BEEN
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ARRESTED BY SARG SECURITY. HE SAID ANNOUNCEMENT OF
THEIR CAPTURE WILL BE MADE ANY DAY BY SYRIAN MEDIA. ALSO
ACCORDING TO DUTCH EMBASSY LOCAL EMPLOYEE SECRETARY OF
TARTUS BAATH PARTY BRANCH, WHO IS AN ALAWITE, HAS RECENTLY
BEEN ASSASSINATED.

9. COMMENT: SHOEFI IS PRONE TO DEVELOPING ANTI-ASAD ANALYSES OF EVENTS, BUT HE DOES HAVE WIDE CIRCLE OF CONTACTS, VALID LEADERSHIP CREDENTIALS AND AT TIMES RELIABLE INSIGHTS INTO SEAMIER SIDE OF ASAD REGIME.
MURPHY

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